



July 26, 2011

Federal Communications Commission
c/o Marlene Dortch, Secretary
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

WT 11-65: In the Matter of applications of AT&T Inc. and Deutsche Telekom AG for consent to assign or Transfer Control of licenses and Authorizations

Dear Chairman Genachowski and Commissioners:

The availability of broadband communications service today is, in many ways, analogous to that of electrical power about 75 years ago. Although most American cities had electricity by the mid-1930s, rural America was still in the dark. Because of high per-customer costs, utility companies did not want to build electric distribution lines to serve sparsely populated areas. But, with the financial support of the federal government, people in rural regions developed a solution – member-owned, not-for-profit utilities. One such group, the Choctawhatchee Electric Cooperative (CHELCO), was formed in 1941. Today, we serve Walton and Okaloosa counties and parts of Holmes and Santa Rosa counties in the state of Florida.

At present, many rural areas and small communities do not have high-speed data communications service because providers are hesitant to install the needed wired infrastructure in regions where population density is low. As was the case when they were denied electricity, rural residents and businesses without broadband are at a distinct disadvantage. This is increasingly true as high-speed access to the Internet becomes more and more vital for economic development.

But, as it was with electrical power, there is a way to address the problem. The solution lies in the expansion of wireless broadband networks, which can now support data speeds near those of the highest-quality wired service. And, once again, the federal government needs to play a significant role.

If the Commission were to approve the above-referenced matter, it would be a major step toward making economically-priced wireless broadband service available to more Americans, particularly those in underserved rural areas. Approval of the AT&T/T-Mobile merger would clear the way for a major expansion and enhancement of their combined networks, resulting in the availability of 4th Generation Long Term Evolution service to an additional 55 million Americans. The benefits would be numerous, including enhanced educational and health care services and the ability for rural businesses to compete on a more equal footing with urban-based enterprises.

The Commission has an opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of many millions of Americans. I urge you to approve this application.

Sincerely,

Leigh V. Grantham
Chief Executive Officer

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